

Standard 7-3 The student will demonstrate an understanding of political, social, and economic upheavals that occurred throughout the world during the age of revolution, from 1770 through 1848.

7-3.2 Explain the causes, key ideas, and effects of the French Revolution, including the influence of ideas from the American Revolution and the Enlightenment and ways that the Revolution changed social conditions in France and the rest of Europe. (P, H)

Taxonomy Level: B 2 Understand/Conceptual Knowledge

Previous/future knowledge:

In Global Studies, students will compare the key elements of the revolutions that took place on the European and American continents in the nineteenth century, including social and political motivations for these revolutions and the changes in social organization that emerged following them (GS-4.4).

In US History, students will explain the impact of the Declaration of Independence and the American Revolution on the American colonies and on the world at large (USHC-2.2).

It is essential for students to know:

The French Revolution was inspired by the Enlightenment (7-2.2) and the American Revolution (7-2.3). **The Enlightenment** presented new beliefs about authority and the role of the individual in government. John Locke presented ideas of natural rights of life, liberty, and property, and he declared that it is the purpose of governments to protect these rights. Furthermore, he stated that if a government fails to protect these rights, it is the right of the people to overthrow the government. The **American Revolution** drew upon Locke's beliefs in the Declaration of Independence. The ideals and success of the American Revolution served as a model for the French.

The French Revolution was caused, in part, by the social imbalance of the Old Regime. Under this system, France was divided into three social classes: the First, Second, and Third Estates. The First Estate was the Roman Catholic clergy, who owned 15% of the land and were 1% of the population. The Second Estate, the nobility, was 2% of the population and owned up to 25% of the land. The rest of the population, the Third Estate; which included lawyers, craftsmen, merchants and peasants paid the majority of the taxes on the remainder while being underrepresented in government. The French Revolution also was caused by King Louis XVI, who was a weak and extravagant leader in a time of crisis. He incurred great debts caused by war (including the French alliance in the American Revolution) and his own spending. His people were already highly taxed, and banks refused to loan him any more money. This required him to call together the Estates-General., the French legislative body.

After the calling of the Estates-General, the Third Estate insisted on a new power structure that would allow one-man, one-vote, guaranteeing them greater representation in the Estates-General. When their request was denied, they seceded and formed the National Assembly, symbolizing an end to absolute monarchy and the start of representative government in France. When shut out of the proceedings of the Estates General a few days later, they gathered on the king's tennis

courts to write a new constitution for the government, called the Tennis Court Oath. Shortly thereafter, on July 14, 1789, a mob of peasants stormed the Bastille, a prison and armory. Riots broke out across the countryside, symbolizing the full onset of the French Revolution. In 1791, a constitutional monarchy was established, significantly weakening the power of the king and granting power to the people in the form of the Legislative Assembly.

The revolution became increasingly radical in nature. In late 1791, the Constitution was set aside, the king imprisoned, and the legislature took over in the form of the National Convention. The Convention declared France a republic based on universal male suffrage. The Convention initiated a military draft to raise an army to protect the revolution from the armies of other European monarchs and instituted the guillotine as a way of protecting the revolution from “enemies” within France. Many of the Convention were members of the Jacobins, a radical revolutionary group. From this group, Maximilien Robespierre increasingly gained power until he became the leader of the Committee of Public Safety in mid-1793. Robespierre gained power as a dictator and began the Reign of Terror in France (an example of failure to obey a country’s constitution and unlimited government 7-2.3) guillotining 25,000-40,000 “enemies of the Revolution”, including the king and queen. Determining that Robespierre was too radical (and fearing for their own lives), members of the National Convention executed Robespierre in July of 1794.

After the execution of Robespierre, the revolution took a more conservative turn. From 1795-1799, France was ruled by five moderate men known as the Directory. During this time, Napoleon Bonaparte was making a name for himself in the French army. When the Directory lost favor in France in 1799, Bonaparte staged a coup d’etat and took the title of First Consul.

As ruler of a country that had been unstable for nearly ten years, Napoleon established a national banking system, set up an efficient taxation system, and ended government corruption. He restored the position of the Catholic Church in France, gaining the favor of the people and of the Pope. He also wrote a uniform system of laws known as the Napoleonic Code. In 1804, with the support of the people, Napoleon crowned himself emperor (again, unlimited government and ignored constitution 7-2.3). Napoleon began his quest for a European empire, and by 1812, he controlled most of Europe. Beginning in 1812, Napoleon made three mistakes that led to his downfall: the blockade of Britain (called the Continental System); the Peninsular War; and the invasion of Russia. In 1814, Napoleon surrendered his throne and was exiled to Elba. He escaped from Elba in 1815, gathered his allies, and in the Hundred Days, waged his final attempt at power. Napoleon’s final defeat came at Waterloo, after which he was exiled to St. Helena.

The immediate effects of the French Revolution were the overturning of **the social and political structures within France**. The monarch was replaced with various forms of rule, and the Old Regime was ended. Napoleon came to power and brought France to the height of power while warring with other European nations. However, the Congress of Vienna reestablished the balance of power following his exile in 1815. Long-term effects of the French Revolution included a conservative turn to leadership across Europe as the Congress of Vienna reinstated monarchs to the thrones in countries Napoleon had defeated in an effort to reestablish the balance of power in Europe. As a result of Napoleon’s conquest of Europe, nationalist sentiments were ignited. Enlightenment ideals spread across Europe and throughout the world in

the 1800s, contributing to the growth of nationalism, which in turn caused various revolutions across Europe and Latin America.

Major issues that contributed to the French Revolution were the struggles between conservative, moderate, and radical philosophies. Students should understand the basic meaning of these terms as used during the French Revolution. Conservatives originally held power and desired to retain the monarchical form of government. Moderates and radicals embraced Enlightenment ideals and, at various times during the revolution, led the government in their beliefs in “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity”, which became the rallying cry for the masses. Additionally, women joined the fight for equal rights, but to no avail. Early in the revolution, the suppression of the church in favor of the state was thought to embody Enlightenment ideals. In many ways, this move only served to alienate the peasants who had originally supported the reforms of the government. Napoleon wisely reversed this trend during this reign.

It is not essential for students to know:

It is not necessary for students to know specific details about the American Revolution beyond the influence of the Enlightenment. Additionally, in-depth biographical information about Marie Antoinette is not necessary. Although there are many details to the descriptions of each of the governments leading France between 1789 and 1815, a brief description of each will suffice in order for students to be able to grasp the necessity for the changes. Napoleon Bonaparte himself is a fascinating study, but it is not necessary to know specific battles not essential to this indicator (beyond the ones leading to his defeat) or the other aspects of his rise, regime and fall.

Assessment guidelines:

The objective of this indicator is to **explain** the causes, key ideas, and effects of the French Revolution; therefore the focus should be on **identifying** ideas from the American Revolution and the Enlightenment that influenced the Revolution. Students should also be able to **describe** ways that the Revolution changed social conditions in France and the rest of Europe.